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MEMORANDUM

ATTENTION Senate
FROM Jon Driver, Vice-President, Academic and Provost
RE: Certificates
DATE July 27, 2011
PAGES 1/1

As a result of concerns expressed at SCUP and Senate regarding the frequency with which new Certificate programs were emerging, SCUP imposed a temporary moratorium on the approval of new Certificates not already in the approval process. I then requested that Sarah Dench (Director, University Curriculum) and Kate Ross (Registrar) conduct a brief review of the data available regarding Certificates. Their findings are contained in the attached report. The report identifies some useful procedural changes that will help to ensure that Certificates are kept current and active; that the documentation for new Certificates is clear and complete; and that all new proposals for Certificates are more rigorously vetted to ensure they contain sufficient evidence of demand to justify their creation.

An important question raised by the report is the extent to which a better definition of the purposes of Certificates is required. The report identifies two emerging categories of Certificates: (1) Certificates designed to provide breadth and/or interdisciplinarity, and (2) Certificates designed to provide opportunities for specialization. I support this categorization of Certificates, and I believe that proposals for new Certificates should state clearly whether they are intended to provide breadth or specialization.

Other recommended processes identified in the report can be implemented by committees. The proposed annual review of student numbers graduating with Certificates will become part of the work of the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies, and the analysis of feasibility of direct admission to Certificate programs will be conducted by an ad hoc working group that I will ask the Registrar to chair.

Lastly, at the next meeting of SCUP (September 14, 2011), I will request that SCUP remove the moratorium on the approval of new Certificates.

I welcome feedback from Senate on the above, and on the attached report.

Attachment (1)



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MEMORANDUM

ATTENTION Dr. Jon Driver, Chair, SCUP
FROM Sarah Dench and Kate Ross
RE: Undergraduate Certificates Review

A handwritten signature, likely of Sarah Dench, consisting of stylized initials and a surname.

DATE June 27, 2011
PAGES 6

Following discussion at SCUP and SCUS, attached is a report and recommendations on Undergraduate Certificates. Following feedback from both SCUP and SCUS, the recommendations were revised, and are now submitted to SCUP for decision.

Undergraduate Certificates: Review and Recommendations

As approved by Senate, an undergraduate certificate program consists mainly of regular lower division courses; upper division courses may be (and often are) included. A certificate program should be between 18 to 30 units, or the equivalent of between one or two terms of university study. Certificates are not considered to be “stand alone” programs, and students are not usually admitted to the university directly for or solely to undergraduate certificate programs.

Graduand data (attached, Appendix A) provided by the Institutional Research and Planning (IRP) office reflects rates at which certificates have been awarded over the past 10 years. Some are well used, and some not. In the cases of low or diminishing rates of certificate completion, it is likely that the certificates were developed at a time when other offerings in a given program were more limited, and, over time, the certificates have been surpassed by newer program offerings. In other cases, it is likely that students are simply “voting with their feet”. Leaving low enrollment certificates in the SFU Calendar is a matter of a need for improved housekeeping, and while there is no monetary cost to having credentials with low enrollments “on the books”, there is little or no advantage to SFU in retaining these.

The data from IRP on certificate completion is useful, but cannot indicate the extent to which students are intentionally completing certificates, or are instead “accidentally” completing certificates. Students can simply accrue sufficient credits and courses as they complete their degrees, such that by the time they apply to graduate, a graduation check by an advisor reveals that a certificate (or more than one) has also been completed.

In probing the data further by examining students’ majors for some certificates, we hoped to be able to see patterns that might shed light on the issue of intentionality. However, the pattern of certificate enrollment by majors was inconclusive. Sometimes majors are receiving certificates in a related discipline, and sometimes certificates are being granted to non-majors. In other words, students may be completing certificates in areas complementary to their majors (perhaps for disciplinary depth or specialization) or seeking out certificates in other disciplines (for breadth or interdisciplinarity). In either case, the rationale could be to improve one’s employment prospects, or simply for the sake of interest. Without surveying certificate recipients, nothing can be concluded about student intentions from the current data.

What is clear is that in the past two years, the creation of new undergraduate certificates has accelerated. From the 2008/09 academic year to 2010/11 (3 years), 12 new undergraduate certificate programs were created and approved. This is a significant increase from the previous 5 years, in which only 5 new certificates were approved over that period. A number of factors may account for the increase:

- Over the past 10 years, SFU hired a significant number of new faculty members, resulting in the emergence of new curricula and programming;
- As disciplines grow and change, and/or become more interdisciplinary, certificate programs are regarded as a cost-effective means for Faculties to reflect this growth and to incubate potential new program areas;
- Academic units are hoping to attract new students to their disciplines, and are creating certificates as a form of marketing;
- Academic units are receiving feedback from industry or from students that a concentration of courses with a particular focus area will enhance future career development.

Recently, the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences has discussed a revised approach to FASS undergraduate certificates, which would necessitate a change in the criteria for certificates, create two categories of certificates (general, requiring lower division credits; advanced, requiring upper division credits), and procedural changes regarding how students enter and complete these credentials. Elements of the FASS proposals are useful and warrant consideration, but it will not serve SFU well to have a Faculty-by-Faculty approach, and before new categories of certificates are created, it is important that SFU clarify the purpose or role of certificates as a credential. SFU should continue to have an overarching set of criteria and procedures, and modifications to create categories within an established credential, such as distinguishing between general and advanced certificates, should be applied university-wide and not specific to one Faculty.

The current requirements for undergraduate certificates are stated as follows in the SFU Calendar:

Certificate Program

A certificate program consists mainly of regular lower division courses; upper division courses may be included. The program should be the equivalent of between one half and one full year of university study (18-30 units).

Program Requirements

- *Students must maintain a minimum grade point average of 2.0 calculated on all courses applied to the certificate that are completed at Simon Fraser University. Duplicate courses are counted only once.*

Note

- *Units applied to one certificate may be applied also to major or minor programs of a bachelor's degree under the normal regulations governing those programs but may not be applied to another Simon Fraser University certificate or diploma.*
- *Some of the courses have prerequisites not included in the certificate requirements. Students are responsible for satisfying the prerequisites of all courses in their programs. Prerequisite information can be found in the University Calendar in the course descriptions section.*

Consideration should be given to amending the administration of Undergraduate Certificates as follows:

1. Undergraduate certificates that have low or diminishing enrollments should be identified via a process of annual review of enrollment numbers, and discontinued as soon as feasible. As happens now with inactive courses, SCUS will receive from IRP an annual report of credentials awarded over the previous 5-year period to identify certificates that might be eliminated. Subsequently, departments would be asked to eliminate the certificate(s) or provide a rationale to SCUS for continuance. This review process will take place initially at SCUS, and requests to eliminate certificates will be forwarded to SCUP, Senate, and the Board of Governors according to the normal process for the elimination of programs.
2. Proposals for new undergraduate certificates must include sufficient justification and/or evidence of demand, and a target enrollment plan. Proposals with insufficient information will not be approved by SCUP. The Director, University Curriculum will review and revise as needed the guidelines for the creation of new programs, to include any additional information required for certificate proposals.
3. Normally, no certificate should be designed so that all students who take a major or minor in a program are automatically eligible for a certificate in addition to the degree. Proposals for new certificates should include information as to how the requirements for a certificate differ from the requirements of the major and/or minor. In the case of significant overlap of requirements between a proposed certificate and another program, a rationale for the overlap must be provided.
4. To receive a certificate, students should normally be required to declare into them at least two semesters prior to graduation. This will allow for better departmental and student planning, and improved advising support.
5. SFU Senate should discuss and clarify the purpose or role of certificates as a credential. SFU should continue to have an overarching set of criteria and procedures, and modifications to create categories within an established credential should be university-wide.
6. Proposals for certificates should identify if they are designed to appeal to students from within (for specialization) or outside (for breadth and interdisciplinarity) of a given program.
7. A small working group, led by the Registrar, will be tasked with investigating whether or not it is appropriate or feasible for the university to directly admit students into undergraduate certificates, and if so, how. Currently, according to the criteria for certificates, direct admission to certificates should not happen, but in practice it does. It may be that certificates are a useful credential to attract older learners back to university study or to support career progress, but at this time there is no data available about this. Clarity about stand-alone admissions to certificates will allow for improved communications and marketing of certificates, and support improved curricular planning. Following discussion and consultation the working

group will, if appropriate, provide for approval to Senate new Calendar language that further defines certificates, and provides information on routes to certificate programs.



INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH AND PLANNING
Certificate Programs at SFU and Number Awarded by Calendar Year, 2001 to 2010

Faculty	Program Abbr	1st Term Valid	Description	Number of Certificates Awarded in Calendar Year										10-Year Total
				2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	
Applied Sciences				27	26	47	35	20	10	5	2	2	3	177
	CCMPT	0657	Computing Studies Certificate	27	26	47	35	20	10	5	2	2	3	177
Arts & Social Sciences				390	370	461	383	373	339	309	261	241	214	3,341
	CSC (or CSC2)	0657	Cert for Senior Citizens	4	1	3	1	2	1	2	4	1		19
	CEXPL	1067	Certificate in Explorations									1	4	5
	CLBST	1037	Certificate in Labour Studies				1			1		1	1	4
	CLA	0657	Certificate in Liberal Arts	277	270	347	299	321	266	256	197	183	128	2,544
	CPH	0657	Certificate in Public History		5									5
	CCS	0657	Chinese Studies Certificate	5	7	12	8	11	7	10	4	2	1	67
	CCG	0657	Criminology General Cert			1	1			1			4	7
	CCRM	1097	Cultural Resource Management										6	6
	CET	0657	Ethnic & Intercult Relats Cert		1		1	1	1					4
	CFA	0657	Family Studies Certificate	3	8	3	4		4	2	1			25
	CFNP	0657	First Nations Lang Prof Cert	19	3	9	6	8	11	3	13	17	14	103
	CNSR	0657	First Nations Studies Res Cert	3	1	3	2	1	1	3	5		1	20
	CFP	0657	French Language Prof Cert	5	6	10	3	4	1	1	5	6	6	47
	CGERM	1084	German Studies Certificate									1	1	2
	CHS	0657	Hellenic Studies Certificate	3	2	1	1	1	1	1	7	6	6	29
	CPS	1101	Police Studies Certificate										11	11
	CRELS	1084	Religious Studies Certificate									3	9	12
	CSP	0657	Spanish Language Prof Cert	6	12	17	8	7	21	15	10	8	6	110
	CESL	0657	Teaching ESL Linguistics Cert	65	54	55	48	17	25	14	15	12	16	321
	CFS	1097	Certificate in African Studies											
	CITAL	1057	Certificate in Italian Studies											
	CWRRH	1104	Certificate Writing & Rhetoric											
	CCOR	1107	Correctional Studies Cert											
	CCRWR	1104	Creative Writing Certificate											
	CCA	0657	Criminology Advanced Cert											
	CFOR	1107	Forensic Studies Certificate											
	CFREN	1107	French & Education Certificate											
	CLS	1107	Legal Studies Certificate											
	CMREN	1104	Medieval and Renaissa St. Cert											
	CSJ	1097	Social Justice Certificate											
Business Administration				0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	2	8
	CIEL	1081	Int'l Experiential Learning									6	2	8
	CCSR	1107	Corporate Social Responsibility											



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Faculty	Program Abbr	1st Term Valid	Description	Number of Certificates Awarded in Calendar Year										10-Year Total
				2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	
Education				1	0	1	0	0	0	0	16	16	16	50
	CLITI	0657	Literacy Instruction Cert	1		1								2
	CPP	1067	Cert in Professional Practices								16	16	16	48
Environment				42	41	60	42	55	39	58	43	38	48	466
	CED	0657	Community Economic Devt Cert	12	13	26	14	27	13	10	6	3		124
	CSCDE	0787	Cert in Sustainable Comm Devel							17	12	12	24	65
	CSIEN	0981	Spatial Info Systems Cert	17	14	27	20	14	19	18	10	12	13	164
	CUSEN	0981	Urban Studies Certificate	13	14	7	8	14	7	13	15	11	11	113
	DEVGC	1057	Development Studies (Graduate Cert)											
Science				62	57	65	63	78	95	96	93	99	81	789
	CACT	0657	Actuarial Mathematics Cert	7	7	6	5			1	2			28
	CAHNS	0981	Applied Human Nutrition Cert	6	5	10	11	12	28	26	24	24	20	166
	CEASC	1081	Certificate in Earth Sciences								1			1
	CFG	0657	Forestry Geoscience Cert			2	1		2	2				7
	CHFSS (or CHFS2)	0981	Health & Fitness Studies Cert	49	45	47	46	66	65	67	66	75	61	587
Total Certificates Awarded				522	494	634	523	526	483	468	415	402	364	4,831

Note: Certificates reported under current Faculty structure.

Source: credawrd2, SIMS Acad_Prog_Tbl